

# THE NEW YORK ARCHITECT

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## SUGGESTIONS TO PROMOTERS OF TOWN PLANNING SCHEMES\*

### INTRODUCTORY



THE following suggestions have been drawn up by the Royal Institute of British Architects, as a result of the Town Planning Conference and Exhibition held in October, 1910.

At that Conference factors of an architectural character naturally received special attention, but so many others were shown to have a bearing on town development that the Institute has endeavored to include in these suggestions such preliminary considerations as may demand attention before any definite plan is prepared. It will be obvious that many of these notes apply only to large schemes involving, in addition to the development of new areas, civic improvements in the town itself; and at first sight they may seem to go beyond the scope of the Town Planning Act. It will, however, be found that comparatively small developments may be far-reaching in their ultimate effects upon the plan of a town; and that desirable future improvements in the central area, though not forming part of the scheme, may be rendered impossible if not provided for in the first instance.

Part I of these notes includes suggestions for actual town planning work, arranged as far as possible in the order in which the questions would naturally arise.

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### PART I

#### I. CIVIC SURVEY

As a town planning scheme must both direct and limit the development of the area

to which it applies, success can only be expected if it is based on a thorough survey and understanding of all existing conditions. Such survey, in addition to recording the physical state of the site, should cover the social and economic condition of the population and the historic and archaeological interest associated with the locality and its buildings. Some of the information may already be in the possession of various local societies, who would probably be glad to undertake the necessary collection and tabulation.

The present distribution of the population, its standard of health and well-being, its occupations, and the available opportunities for education and culture should be studied, while any tendencies towards change or development should be noted. The topography of the region, with any natural conditions of the site, the natures of the soils and sub-soils, the average rainfall, and particulars of the prevailing winds and other climatic details affecting water supply, vegetation, and animal life, are all relevant; and freedom of access to natural advantages, such as river or sea-coast, for fisheries, commerce, or recreation, specially affects the condition of the people.

The history of the development of the town will show the influences which have led to its existing condition, and will draw attention to buildings or other material survivals, or traditional associations, worthy of preservation with a view to maintaining its individuality; particulars of local government areas, municipal and parochial, and details as to ownership and usual tenure of

\*From the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 26 Aug., 1911.



land are necessary; also there should be included a survey of the existing open spaces, parks, playgrounds, etc., and the use made of them. Some particulars may well be added of existing activities towards betterment, both municipal and private, the working of which may have a bearing on that civic improvement which it is the purpose of town planning to promote. And, finally, estimates of probable future increase of population and its requirements for industrial, educational, recreational, and other purposes should be made, together with a series of suggestions of all desirable future improvements, many of which may be facilitated by a town planning scheme, even where they cannot be embodied in it.

## II. TECHNICAL SURVEY

For use of those actually engaged in planning the town, much of this information may be summarized in diagrams and maps. For example, Ordnance maps may be colored to indicate the distribution of industrial, residential and commercial areas; the relative density of population in different parts, and any insanitary or very poor districts may be shown, also the relative values of land, the distribution of parks and other open spaces, and the areas suitable for their extension, and the periodic growth of the town. It is necessary for every town planning scheme under the Act that there should be an accurate map prepared showing the ownership of the land, with correct boundaries. Plans showing the levels are essential; the contour lines should, if possible, indicate every 5 feet change in level. A contour model would be found very helpful in many cases. The 25-inch Ordnance maps are the most convenient in scale as a basis for this work; they should be brought up to date, showing new developments that have taken place; and all tram lines, drainage, water, gas, electric light, and other existing services should be marked; while any limits of capacity and levels affecting them should be noted.

A survey should be made of all features worth preserving, including well-grown trees; while particulars of specially beautiful distant prospects or other scenic considerations are very valuable. A record of the best views of the finest existing buildings,

with photographs taken from standpoints marked upon the plan, will also prove useful for the town planner when grouping his buildings. Some record, again illustrated by photographs, of all that goes to make up the individuality of the town from an architect's point of view is desirable, and might include local uses of building materials, local customs as to types of dwellings, and the size and shape of building plots. The preservation of individuality in a town is desirable on æsthetic grounds. Places where picturesque beauty exists, or where symmetrical planning has been carried out in the past, should be noted, so that what is good of either type may be preserved, and extensions may be so designed as to enhance the existing effect.

## III. NEW TRAFFIC FACILITIES

The survey described above, or such portion of it as may be relevant to the particular area under consideration, having been prepared, the working out of the lines of future development can be commenced, and perhaps the first step should be to determine how far new facilities for locomotion are required. The railway companies and others interested should be consulted so that railway extensions, new railways, or new sidings and shunting grounds falling within the scheme may be located at an early stage, and the same applies to new waterways or the development of existing docks and harbours; their position will often be fixed within very narrow limits by the nature of the ground and other existing circumstances, in which case they will become important determining factors, greatly influencing the design. Within the possible limits, however, they should be placed and treated so that they may add to, or at worst detract as little as possible from the amenities of the town. The noise of railways in close proximity to buildings will be much reduced when they can be made to run in a cutting, the banks of which are planted with trees. The importance of railways as the modern means of approach and of their stations as the modern gateways of the town, would suggest a more dignified treatment than they usually receive.

In the case of docks and harbours, it is essential to provide for plenty of siding ac-



commodation and warehouse ground adjacent to them; while dwellings for the large number of work people employed, often at irregular hours, should be provided within the range of convenient access. Having made these provisions, the great decorative effect of large sheets of water, and the attractiveness of ports, where the docks and harbours are intimately associated with the town, as at Havre or Copenhagen, should be borne in mind.

#### IV. MAIN AND SUBSIDIARY CENTRES

The formation of appropriate centres for governmental, administrative, commercial, or educational purposes not only makes for economic efficiency, but helps architectural design by providing points of emphasis around which the plan may be arranged; and the position of these should be fixed at an early stage. The administrative buildings would naturally form the chief centre, while markets and exchanges would be grouped in commercial centres. Power-stations and similar buildings may lead to the formation of industrial centres. Where University buildings exist they should form the main educational centre; and in all towns the grouping of educational opportunities, such as are afforded by Museums, Libraries, Picture Galleries, Gymnasias, Art, Science, or Technical Colleges, would facilitate and extend their use, and would also serve to emphasise the important place which education takes in the life of any community.

Main centres will only be required in large schemes, but some opportunities for creating minor centre points will occur in almost any scheme, for, however small, it will generally include a few buildings connected with education, recreation, social or religious life, the relative prominence of which may be used to secure the desirable emphasis in the centre.

Greater use in this country might well be made of the *place*, a feature akin to the more ancient Greek agora or Roman forum, and common in Continental towns. For important centres, the grouping of several *places* around the main buildings affords an opportunity of securing adequate scale for the dominating feature without making any of the individual places of too great size to be effective. In designing *places*, which may be

regarded in some respects as open-air rooms, the value of securing a sense of enclosure should be borne in mind; particularly when they are intended to be places of resort for the purpose of markets, public meetings, or recreation. In older cities there is constantly recurring difficulty in finding suitable sites for public monuments; such sites should be provided when designing new centres.

The character and architectural treatment of centres should be appropriate to their purpose and expressive of their relative importance. Governmental or administrative centres would naturally be treated in a monumental manner indicative of the important functions there to be housed, and the design should lead up to something of a climax; while, on the other hand, a more homely treatment might be appropriate for the minor centre of a residential area, though in all cases some degree of architectural emphasis is essential. Where either the nature of the ground or the directions of existing streets make a regular lay-out undesirable, it becomes all the more necessary to consider carefully the placing of each building, if the different views of the centre are to compose successfully.

The importance of placing public buildings where they can be well seen and will confer the greatest amount of dignity upon the district in which they stand cannot be exaggerated. Whether such buildings are detached, or grouped along some fine street, or around a *place* to form a centre, ample space should be provided as well for their proper setting as to accommodate without inconvenience the large number of people likely to assemble there. The dedication of a definite proportion of the site of a public building for these purposes is recognised as essential in many foreign countries. In some towns, existing parks will afford an opportunity for arranging public buildings in a setting of foliage and greensward which should by no means be neglected. But whatever its character, a fine civic centre will only result from the harmonious combination of all the parts, while discordant elements, even in minor details, may destroy much of the effect. The architect should, therefore, be given the opportunity to determine the treatment, to assign positions for any monuments, to select



or design the accessories, and arrange the lighting, so that all may contribute to enhance the effect aimed at.

#### V. TRAFFIC CENTRES

Points towards which the streams of traffic will tend to converge must necessarily occur at or near the different centres above referred to. In many cases, where it is advisable to secure some sense of enclosure or seclusion, it will be better that this focus of traffic should be just outside the centre itself, convenience requiring ready access from all directions to such a centre, but not that the streams of traffic should actually cross it. In addition to such centres as have been referred to, lines of traffic would naturally converge towards railway stations, piers, harbours, markets, and bridges; to avoid congestion ample space must be provided at such points. Some open space should indeed be provided wherever several converging roads meet. If such space is not available, it may be better to bring branching roads singly into the main road, and not allow several to converge at a point. Railway stations should be so arranged that pedestrians can approach or leave them without having to cross lines of concentrated vehicular traffic.

In planning traffic centres, while the grouping of buildings suitable for other centres would obviously be out of place, it is nevertheless of great importance to maintain a regular relation between the different roads converging on the centre and the façades of the buildings between these roads if a haphazard result is to be avoided. Some roads may run through the *place* in a direct line, while others may so enter it that the buildings opposite form an orderly terminal to the street view. Where many tram lines converge, a large open space, as free as possible from other traffic, for marshalling the cars for the different routes is found very valuable; and such requirements as cab ranks and shelters should find a place in the plan.

#### VI. SYSTEM OF MAIN ROADS

Good lines of communication will naturally be required between the centres referred to above; and, in addition, the street system should provide for a sufficient num-

ber of radial lines leading out of the town and connecting with existing main roads, also for ring roads around the town, linking them together. The large volume of traffic between residential areas and the districts of commercial and industrial employment should be especially provided for by wide roads, which, with the radial roads, are likely to be much used for motor traffic.

The main and subsidiary centres, and the chief directions of communication having been determined, a rough, diagrammatic plan will result, upon which must be based the design for the framework of main roads which will form the skeleton of the scheme. On an undulating site this framework will necessarily be influenced by the contours of the ground, in order that easy gradients may be maintained, and will generally also be affected by existing highways, railways, waterways, and other obstructing or determining features, and the points where such can be bridged. This main scheme should, however, be as simple, definite, and easily read as possible, whether the plan takes a regular or irregular shape, which must be governed by the local circumstances.

#### VII. SECONDARY ROADS

This framework will have divided the land into a number of areas surrounded by main roads. Each of these will require to be developed by a secondary series to provide communication from the area to the different main roads surrounding it, and to any secondary centres contained within it; and, in addition, for complete development for building purposes, a still further series of minor roads, not required for through traffic but only for access to the buildings, may be planned with less regard to convenience of traffic and special regard to the desirable placing of the particular class of buildings they are intended to serve; as, for example, to secure suitable aspects for the houses fronting upon them, and good views from the adjacent roads.

The relation of the secondary roads to the main framework should be carefully studied, so that the façades along the main roads may not be awkwardly broken, and satisfactory vistas may be opened out. It is not necessary that the planning of these secondary roads in one of the spaces should



be symmetrical with the planning in another. The important consideration is that the relation between the minor roads and the surrounding main roads and centres should be maintained. There is, therefore, ample opportunity to develop each area of land for the particular purpose for which it is required, without detriment to the design. A series of roads which is adapted for cottage property would be unsuitable for business purposes, and one which is suitable for either of these would be quite unfitted for developing land required for factories or large works; it is essential, therefore, that the system of planning should allow for these differences.

While within limits more or less narrow, according to the circumstances, traffic and other considerations will determine the general direction of most of the main roads, as, for example, from A to B or C to D, ample freedom will be afforded for working out a design embodying proper consideration of the architectural effect of the roads and the road junctions; for traffic considerations are not antagonistic to architectural principles, and it will be found that wide, handsome roads, with well-designed crossings, provide easy thoroughfares, and will attract traffic.

#### VIII. CHARACTER AND TREATMENT OF ROADS

So long as the conditions of successful treatment in each are maintained, both straight and curved streets may appropriately be used. Straight streets give the most direct access from point to point, afford the most dignified approach to important buildings, and where well-proportioned and not unduly long provide good architectural sites. Curved streets, on the other hand, afford on one side at least a better display of the façades along the street itself, with a more varied street picture, and may be readily adapted to the contours of the ground. On a curved street the buildings of greatest beauty and importance will be best seen if placed on the concave side, while in a straight street the terminal position is the prominent one. A set-back in the building line on a portion of a straight street will, however, create positions of considerable prominence, and will enable the side of a building nearly square with the spectator to displace in the street picture part of the acute perspective

of the façade which may sometimes, if prolonged too far without a break, be unsatisfactory. In such a break or set-back a clump of trees may also be planted, the foliage of which in some positions would make a pleasant interlude in the street façade.

The building line will often do more to determine the final effect than the street line, and the proper placing of the buildings and careful adjustment of the frontage lines is therefore an essential part of town planning.

When corners have to be rounded off for the convenience of traffic, or roads made to wind in order to scale some steep bank, it is by no means always needful to break up an otherwise regular grouping of buildings; instead a frontage line differing from the street line may be laid down. On hilly sites the arrangement of the buildings to enhance or to contradict the slope of the ground may be of greater moment than the lines of the buildings on plan; and on such sites the effectiveness of the result will greatly depend on the massing of the buildings.

The length of a street view can be determined by a centrally placed building, by a diversion in the line of the street, or by forking the street. One or other of these means should be taken to prevent indefinitely prolonged vistas, and to secure a suitable closing feature. When placing buildings as terminal features upon which several roads converge from different directions not square with each other their probable type must be considered. A triumphal arch is hardly a happy terminal when looked at obliquely, while a circular domed building will symmetrically close a vista from many directions.

The great architectural opportunities afforded by bridges should be remembered; and while the general position of many roads must be determined by the possibility from an engineering point of view of bridging under or over railways, waterways, or other obstacles, the lines of crossing should be so arranged as to accord with the best architectural treatment of the bridge and its abutments.

Irrespective of traffic considerations, some proportion between the width of the street and the height of the buildings should be maintained; and where lofty and important



buildings are likely to be erected wide streets are necessary.

In an area planned on the lines above suggested, it is possible to grade the widths, character, and construction of the roads according to the purpose to be served; to determine which will be likely to be used for tramways or for motor traffic, where the traffic may be sufficient to justify a road having multiple tracks, and where, on the other hand, only light vehicles attending upon the wants of a few households may be expected. It would then be practicable, while not materially increasing the average expense and area of road surfaces, to make adequate provision for all probable requirements, instead of adopting, as has been usual, one fixed size of street, which is as inadequate for main roads as it is excessive for minor streets.

#### IX. AREAS RESERVED FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES

The locating of special classes of buildings has been incidentally mentioned, and this may often require to be roughly determined before the framework of main roads can be laid down. For industrial and manufacturing purposes the areas to be reserved should be well served by railways, and be adjacent to docks and waterways, where such exist, or conveniently placed for the providing of such facilities. Regard should be had to the prevailing wind in the district, and as far as possible the manufacturing areas should be so placed that any smoke, smell, or noise will be carried away from the town. Special requirements for local industries should be considered when determining these areas.

Exact position for business and commercial areas is perhaps of more importance than for any others. Success or failure in many businesses may depend on the right position being chosen. Generally good business quarters will be found on the direct line between the main residential areas and the most important centres; but the conditions which settle that a street shall become a good shopping street or otherwise are somewhat obscure; there will even in many cases be found a marked difference in the value for this purpose of the two sides of the same street. It is considered essential that large numbers of people should pass; apparently some degree of concentration of traffic in relation to the width of the street is desirable, as shopkeep-

ers do not favour excessive width or generally regard tramways as an advantage. While, therefore, it may be possible to determine fairly accurately the area for business purposes, it may be much more difficult to foresee exactly which of several streets will be most highly prized by shopkeepers. The point is, however, one calling for consideration, and particularly when dealing with improvements which may affect the existing business quarters.

The healthiest and most attractive spots on high ground, with sunny slopes, and where there is something attractive in the outlook, are naturally best adapted for residential purposes; but ample provision must always be made as near as possible to the industrial and commercial centres of employment for those who are obliged, or prefer, to live near their work. A general tendency to reduce the number of cottages allowed to be built on an acre may be expected to result from the Town Planning Act. The number will no doubt vary in different districts, and the questions of the cost of the land and of the amount of available open space, in addition to the individual gardens, may fairly be taken into account in this relation. The excessive scattering of individual buildings is not desirable on account of the large area that would be covered by the town, the inconvenient distances created within it, and the excessive cost of carrying roads, water and other services throughout such a system of development. Some degree of concentration of the buildings in certain places is therefore desirable, and would allow a more generous provision of open spaces to be made; on the other hand, the danger of overcrowding the dwellings in one place to allow a larger open space to be obtained in another must be guarded against.

#### X. OPEN SPACES

When selecting areas for open spaces it is important to determine the exact purpose for which they are required. For playing fields, level ground is essential, while, provided there is convenient access, road frontage along the edge of the fields is a needless extravagance. On the other hand, where an open space or small park is desired to adorn the town, a certain amount of road frontage must be occupied if it is to serve its decora-



tive purpose. For larger parks, areas of special natural beauty, or grounds attached to buildings of archaeological or historic interest, may with advantage be reserved. Water frontages are particularly attractive in connection with parks or promenades, and where a town is fortunate in possessing such advantage, a useful function of a town-planning scheme would be to apportion that frontage between the industrial requirements and those of recreation, and to prevent its being occupied by buildings devoted to purposes for which it offers no advantage. Sometimes the reservation of quite small open spaces may preserve for public use valuable view points of distant prospect or fine existing buildings; in other cases a narrow strip of open space can be reserved within a town area at very little expense, and such strip, suitably planted, may afford a very attractive walk through part of the town, when a more extensive park might be impracticable. Small children's playgrounds, which may occupy corners of back land, are very valuable, as are also small reservations in quiet spots if laid out for a definite purpose.

In the planting of streets or open spaces some definite effect should be aimed at. In some places the avenue will be suitable, in others groups of foliage will be more successful; but broad, simple treatment, with not too much elaboration, will be found to harmonize most successfully with town surroundings. Where trees are to be planted sufficient space for their proper growth should be provided. The successful combination of planting with the architecture of streets and squares is a difficult art, for which a general knowledge of trees and plants affords no adequate qualification.

#### XI. BUILDINGS

In the completed town it is the buildings

which are seen and produce whatever effect, good or bad, is attained; therefore, the problem of town planning in its final form is essentially an architectural problem. The working out of the exact form in which the requirements can be satisfied so as to produce a fine town is a function of the creative imagination; and it can only properly be performed by one who has had the architectural training necessary to enable him to adjust the proportions of the many parts, so to place the different buildings, and group them upon the ground and in relation to each other that when erected they may compose properly.

The preparation of all the data upon which the design must be based hardly falls within the province of the architect; and it would seem that this formulation of the city's requirements, and of the limits within which the designer must work, is the proper sphere of the surveyor (aided of course by the engineer, the valuer, the economist, the sociologist and the antiquarian). He should survey the conditions, suggest the requirements, and should be consulted as to the methods of satisfying them; but for the design of the town plan, the architecturally trained mind is as essential as for the design of a single building; for the work consists in applying upon a wider field and with greater scope the same principles which govern the designing of individual buildings. The appreciation of the relation of masses and voids, the apprehension of the right points for emphasis, and the power to combine into one creation many different parts by bringing them into harmonious proportion are equally required in the field of town planning, if there is to be produced that rhythm in the plan, and that spacious breadth of ordered elevation in the groups of buildings, which so largely constitute the beauty and grandeur of cities.





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### TOWN PLANNING SUGGESTIONS

**E**LSEWHERE in this issue we reprint from the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, Part I of the report of the Town Planning Committee, R.I. B. A. The preface, written by the Right Hon. John Burns, M.P., President of the Local Government Board, follows:

"We feel sure that the valuable suggestions formulated by the Royal Institute of British Architects will be read with great interest by the members and officers of Local Authorities, and indeed by everyone concerned in the science of Town Planning. They indicate the considerations to which the architect would give most weight in framing a Town Planning Scheme, and the Institute is to be commended for having placed at the disposal of the public the great experience and skill of the members of their Town Planning Committee.

"The Local Authorities will of course bear

in mind that many of the suggestions apply to the planning of a new town rather than the development of a suburb, and that they represent the high-water mark of the tide of progress.

"I trust that following on the recent Conference at West Bromwich the engineers and surveyors may see their way to supplement the Code which the Institute has formulated, and that the efforts of all will afford most valuable aid to the promoters of Town Planning Schemes.

"The co-operation of the architect, the surveyor and the engineer with the Local Authority on the lines suggested by the Royal Institute of British Architects will help towards the formulation of plans that will provide for the well-ordered extension of towns and suburbs as their populations grow. The past neglect by communities of the proper relation of industrial growth to residential convenience and public amenity calls for a better organization and for greater harmony between the means of industrial life, the pleasure of domestic surroundings, and the sense of civic beauty as expressed by the adornment of roads, streets, parks, and buildings.

"Till commercial interests are better adapted to a pleasant and neighborly relationship towards the residential, domestic, and artistic environment of a district, our citizens will not enjoy that pride in their towns which Town Planning is designed to secure."

We are pleased to be able to give the report in full, believing that it will be of great interest to the architects, engineers and surveyors of this continent.

### FIFTH AVENUE SHOP ARCHITECTURE

**F**ROM a business standpoint the exterior appearance of the shop is a matter of the first importance. Of recent years the shopkeeper has not been slow to realize the truth of this statement and avail himself of the best as he has understood it. Irrespective of the amount of money invested results have sometimes been highly successful, sometimes disappointing. In these enterprises the difference between success and failure is to be ascribed, very largely, to the desire and ability of their owners to engage competent architectural services.



The Fifth Avenue retail district, extending from Madison Square to Fifty-ninth Street is one of the most conspicuous examples in New York, where shopkeepers have realized the business value of good architecture and have been willing to pay for the best. Elsewhere in this issue are illustrated the shops of two well-known Fifth Avenue jewelry firms, which are models of their kind, that of M. Dreicer & Co., at the southwest corner of Forty-sixth Street, and that of Theodore B. Starr, Inc., a block farther north on the corresponding corner. The same architects were employed in both cases, but the problems presented were essentially different. The results, therefore, are widely different, and deserve special attention both because of their successful presentation and on account of the architects' interesting interpretation of the conditions in each case. The former belongs to that type of shop that lends itself especially to a more or less rich and intimate interior treatment; the space is of more tractable proportions than is the rule in the ordinary New York business building where the ground floor is from fifteen to twenty feet in height. Accordingly, in the Dreicer shop particular emphasis has been laid on the decorative treatment of the interior. An appropriate period style of the French Renaissance has been selected as the vehicle and the rich carving and modeling of walls and ceilings produces at once, upon the prospective patron, an assurance of the firm's reliability and good taste. In the Theodore B. Starr shop the size and loftiness of the space has decided the architects to give prominence to neither exterior nor interior. The front is treated in a reserved and straightforward manner and the impression of the rich marble employed is one of dignity, a feeling which is extended to the interior with its quietly handled wall surfaces and simple ceiling. The total effect on the passerby is of frankness and substantiality, two very essential qualities of an exclusive jewelry business.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson to be pointed from successful architectural efforts of this kind is that display and originality are less desirable in our buildings than a thorough appreciation of the real conditions involved in its problems and the exercising of reasonable common sense and good taste in their solution.

#### MUNICIPAL BUILDING, NEW YORK

In the August 18th issue of the London *Building News and Engineering Journal* appeared an article on the "New Municipal Offices, New York," McKim, Mead & White, architects. There were also illustrations as follows: a two-page half-tone illustration from the architects' drawing, a cut showing a transverse section, and plans of the first floor and a typical floor. This same journal reproduced on a large scale in its issue of January 7th, 1910, the unsuccessful design made by Howells & Stokes for this same building.

#### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Volume VIII, Number 43, of the Official Register of Harvard University is a bulletin or pamphlet of the Department of Landscape Architecture.

"Landscape Architecture is treated by the Department as an art of design closely associated with the other fine arts."

The Graduate School of Applied Science gives the degree of Master in Landscape Architecture. Graduates of colleges or scientific schools may receive the degree "after one full year of residence and study in the Graduate School of Applied Science," but the course ordinarily requires two years and may require longer.

At Harvard certain courses may be pursued in the undergraduate department that make the master's degree more easily attainable in two years of graduate work.

#### INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

The ninth International Congress of Architects will be held at Rome, Italy, October 2nd to 10th, 1911.



## NEWS NOTES AND COMMENT

### HOUSE DECORATION

A Furniture and Decorative Art Exposition will be held at the New Grand Central Palace, Lexington Avenue and Forty-sixth Street, New York, beginning on January 12th, 1912, and continuing ten days. The groundwork will be the study of industrial art as applied to interior decorations.

There will be also a loan exhibition of artistic work in furniture, including tapestries and rugs.

The committee in charge is composed of: John W. Alexander, President of the School Art League; Frank Aloah Parsons, Vice-President of the New York School of Applied Design; Le Mont A. Warner, Professor of Household Fine Arts, Columbia University; William Sloane Coffin, President of the Department of Architecture, Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences; James Parton Haney, Vice-President of the School Art League; Edward P. Sperry, Director of the New York School of Applied Design for Women, and Eugene Pitou, Jr., Secretary of the Municipal Art Society.

### REMOVAL TO FIFTH AVENUE

Messrs. Moran & Jones, interior woodworkers, decorators and furnishers, formerly located at 19 West Thirty-eighth Street, New York, are now in their new offices at 481 Fifth Avenue.

### PENNSYLVANIA STATION

The new Pennsylvania Railroad Station in New York is treated from an engineering point of view in the August 25th issue of the *London Builder*. Accompanying the article are several illustrations including a double-page view showing the Seventh Avenue front and the Thirty-third Street side, similar to one of the views shown in *THE NEW YORK ARCHITECT* in the Fall of 1910. Several interior views are also presented.

### HISTORY OF BRIDGE ENGINEERING

Henry Grattan Tyrrell, C.E., Evanston, Ill., has just published "History of Bridge Engineering." The book is 6x9 inches and

contains about 500 pages, with more than 300 illustrations. The author has undertaken to condense the history of bridges from 4000 B. C. to the present day and to treat his subject in a semi-popular style, though the book is intended primarily for engineers and architects and students of engineering and architecture. There are seventeen chapters as follows: Egyptian, Babylonian and Persian Bridges; Roman Bridges; Mediæval Bridges; Renaissance Bridges; Modern Stone Bridges; Pontoon Bridges; Aqueduct Bridges; Wooden Bridges; Cast Iron Bridges; Simple Truss Bridges; Tubular and Plate Girder Bridges; Suspension Bridges; Cantilever Bridges; Wrought Iron and Steel Arches; Trestles and Viaducts; Solid Concrete Bridges; Reinforced Concrete Bridges. Mr. Tyrrell's venture in the preparation and publishing of the work is, in part, ascribed to the scarcity of literature on the subject. The price is \$4.00.

### "THE AFRICAN ARCHITECT"

"The African Architect" is the name of a new monthly journal published in Johannesburg, under the auspices of the Association of Transvaal Architects. Its policy as announced in its first issue is "to strive consistently for the betterment of the profession, and for its advancement in intellectual and artistic attainments."

### SEMI-INDIRECT ILLUMINATION

In a pamphlet about to be issued by the Macbeth-Evans Glass Company of Pittsburgh, under the title "Decorative and Efficient Interior Illumination," the Alba bowls are credited with much that one would seek in lighting effects and utility. It is claimed that "one of the most agreeable methods of lighting, and one that lends itself readily to decorative purposes, is the semi-indirect system, where part of the light is sent to the ceiling and thence reflected downward, while the rest is transmitted and diffused direct to the lower part of the room." The material used in the shade, it



is contended, has much to do with the results, which when satisfactory, there is illumination that is not only adequate, but soft and restful.

#### INJURY TO LUMBER BY FUNGI

Blue and black stains on lumber stored in yards decrease the value of the lumber, without, however, injuring the wood, since it has been found that the fungi which cause the stains feed upon the materials within the cells of the sap-wood, and do not destroy the fibres. These fungi are largely of the black-knot family, and the most common are species of *Graphium* and *Ceratostomella*. It has been the custom of the lumber companies to dip the wood in solution of sodium carbonate or bicarbonate immediately after the sawing; but the results have been very uneven. To find out why the alkaline solutions sometimes prevented the development of the fungi, and at other times had no effect whatever, the *Scientific American* says, Miss Caroline Rumbold started a series of experimental cultures at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis.

Nutrient media were prepared containing from one-half to two per cent. sodium carbonate, and others with similar amounts of citric acid. The spores of *Ceratostomella* germinated and the fungus thrived on the acid media, and on those containing 0.5 per cent. of  $\text{Na}_2\text{CO}_3$ , but not on those with 1 per cent. or more of the alkali. Freshly-cut sap boards of yellow pine and red gum were then dipped in hot and in cold solutions of sodium carbonate and of sodium bicarbonate, of various strengths, from 1 per cent. to 10 per cent. These boards were inoculated with the spores of the fungus and kept in chambers with a saturated atmosphere. Controls were simply dipped in water, and some of the red-gum boards also in sulphuric acid (5 per cent. and 10 per cent.). The fungus developed on all the controls, including the sulphuric acid boards, and on most of the boards dipped in the alkaline solutions. The hot dip was found to be more effective in inhibiting the growth than the cold solution, and the carbonate of 7 to 8 per cent. was as effective as bicarbonate solution of 8 to 10 per cent.—*The Building News*, London.

"It is necessary for a people at all times to find expression for its æsthetic life. Architecture, like literature, reflects the sentiments and tendencies of a nation's mind. As truly as 'Don Quixote,' 'Don Juan' and 'The Cid' express them, so do the stories told by Toledo, Leon, or Burgos. They reproduce the passions, the dreams, the imagination, and the absurdities of the age which created them."—John A. Gade, in "Cathedrals of Spain."







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